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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1912
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI 0283
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 1300
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 001014

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SUBJECT: CHAD: CHADIAN REBEL PRESENTS GLOOMY OUTLOOK

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Classified By: Economic/Consular Officer Jitu Sardar for Reasons 1.4 (B
) and (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Former GOC loyalist, current opposition member and ethnic Zaghawa Tom Erdimi paints a troubling near-term future for Chad. He claims that rebel groups consider the possibility for political dialogue with President Deby as dead, leaving the military solution as the only way to change their governmentthe. Once the Chadian rebel movement is able to organize itself in a coherent fashion, it will plan a coordinated attack against GOC forces to topple the regime. Currently, the Sudanese government has tacitly agreed to support the efforts of the Zaghawa-led RaFD rebel movement, but the Chadian rebel leadership understands that the GOS has its own plans for a for a post-Deby Chad.
END SUMMARY.

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TIME FOR DIALOGUE IS OVER, PREPARE FOR WAR
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12. (C) On July 3, Tom Erdimi, former GOC official and one of the leading personalities in the Chadian rebel movement, met with Embassy N,Djamena Economic/Consular Officer (on leave in the U.S.) to discuss the political situation in Chad, the status of the rebel movement, and his outlook for the country,s future. At the back-end of a Denny,s restaurant on the south side of Houston, which he currently calls home as he files for political asylum, Erdimi boldly claimed that the rebel movement was alive and well. While the April 13 attack failed, it demonstrated the capabilities of the rebels to reach the capital. Subsequent attacks in the border towns of Tine, Adre, and Ade were intended to counter the impression that the rebel cause was finished, and encourage the defection of GOC soldiers to the rebel cause.

13. (C) According to Erdimi, following the May 3 elections, the rebel movement hoped that President Deby would make a

genuine effort to open a political dialogue that would include all sectors of Chadian society. The movement had hoped that President Deby would allow the African Union or an external actor to facilitate such a dialogue, and that he would accept any power-sharing arrangements proposed by the facilitator. However, he said, Deby's decision to allow for political dialogue only on his own terms, through a committee of wise men, was particularly discouraging. He highlighted a senior military official's memo in July calling for the President to allow a constructive political dialogue as a sign of criticism of Deby within his own ranks.

However, according to Erdimi, Deby's refusal to accept dissenting viewpoints only reveals his arrogance and refusal to cede any of his power.

14. (C) Erdimi pointed out that if the international community were to play a stronger role in pressuring Deby to accept a legitimate form of political dialogue, rebel groups would be willing to lay down their arms and allow the process to move forward. He said that the armed opposition groups felt strongly that the U.S., European Union, and other international partners were following the French lead, which, the rebels believe, is to support the Deby regime. As long as the international community permits Deby to act without constraints, stated Erdimi, the rebel movement will continue to mobilize against the regime.

COORDINATION IS CRUCIAL, AS IS SUDAN'S ROLE

15. (C) Erdimi told Emboff that the armed opposition currently has the means to defeat President Deby. The Rally of Democratic Forces (RaFD) movement currently has 1,500 troops and the United Force for Change (FUC) coalition, which attacked N'djamena in April, has 3,000 troops. Most of the rebel fighters, according to Erdimi, were well trained and

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capable, and were more experienced than the recent recruits in the Chadian National Army. Thus, while Deby's forces would continue to pose a challenge because of newly purchased military equipment, the relative inexperience of his soldiers would put Deby at a disadvantage.

16. (C) Erdimi stated that the primary constraint on the rebel movement was a lack of coordination among rebel groups. (Note: This lack of coordination may be exacerbated by inter-ethnic tension and distrust. The RaFD is dominated by dissident members of President Deby's own Zaghawa tribe. The FUC coalition is made up of rebel groups that represent several other ethnic tribal groups, including the Tama.) Mahamat Nour, leader of the FUC, was refusing to go along with other members of his coalition in the coordination of attacks and discussions of post-Deby power sharing arrangements. Erdimi contended, however, that following the failure of the April 13 attacks, many of Nour's supporters have joined the ranks of the RaFD. (Comment: This inter-tribal distrust was on clear display during the April attack. As the FUC forces were close to the capital, Erdimi called AF/C, expressing serious concern that if the largely non-Zaghawa FUC forces did enter N'Djamena, there would be ethnic cleansing of the city's Zaghawa civilians. We understand that the Zaghawa civilians supported GOC forces in repulsing the rebels.)

17. (C) Meanwhile, the GOS has agreed to continue to support Chadian rebel activities, and offered assistance to the Zaghawa RaFD. Erdimi described the relationship as one of necessity: the rebels require material support for their cause, and Sudan would like to see Deby removed from power. Erdimi said that the RaFD had pledged to the regime in Khartoum that once in power, the RaFD would not support Sudanese rebel groups in Darfur. Nevertheless, Erdimi noted that he and other Chadian rebels were quite aware of Khartoum's own designs, including wanting a non-Zaghawa in

power. However, as Erdimi stated, &better to have an enemy supporting you to remove the devil from power.8

WE WILL NOT HARM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

¶18. (C) Concerning possible threats to international humanitarian workers in Eastern Chad and other expatriates throughout the country, Erdimi stated that the rebel movement understood the fears of international organizations operating in Chad, and would try to defeat Chadian military forces at the Chad-Sudan border. However, if the Chadian army resisted, they would be forced to enter the capital. Erdimi assured EmbOff that the international community would know well in advance of a rebel attack, so as to make the necessary arrangements to protect its citizens and interests.

COMMENT

¶19. (C) Erdimi,s comments indicate that the rebel movement is still extremely active and prepared to launch an offensive against the Chadian regime once it is adequately organized. We should recognize that these assessments by a rebel leader about Chadian rebel capabilities might be exaggerated.

¶10. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.
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